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U.S. Policy on Angola Moves Closer to Rebel Aid

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 — The Reagan Administration said today, in a policy statement of support for rebels fighting the Soviet-backed Government in Angola, that the United States "should sympathize with and support such resistance."

It said it intended to work with Congress in coming weeks on how best to do this.

The statement came after several weeks of discussion in the Administration over how to respond to growing demands in Congress for open financing of aid to the rebels, as well as a parallel move by Administration officials to put together a covert military aid program for the insurgents.

No decisions have been made on how to proceed, a senior Administration official said, and the statement clearly left open the possibility of further efforts for a negotiated settlement in southern Africa that might remove the need for American aid to the rebels.

But the significance of the new policy statement, issued by the State Department on behalf of the Administration, was to signal greater Administration support than before for concrete aid to the rebel forces, who are under the command of Jonas Savimbi and known as Unita.

Soviet Aggression Charged

"There is a widespread feeling in this country that when, as the result of Soviet interference in the internal affairs of another nation, internal resistance mounts to that Soviet involvement, Americans should sympathize with and support such resistance," the statement said. "We are at one with this feeling, and Unita's resistance to the Soviet aggression is a case in point."

It said the Administration was also "pursuing many sensible goals in southern Africa — Namibian independence, Cuban troop withdrawal, reconciliation in South Africa — all in concert with the front-line states."

The reference was to black African states involved in efforts for negotiated solutions to the problems in southern Africa, including independence for South-West Africa, also known as Namibia.

"As we proceed in these endeavors, we want to be supportive of Unita," the Administration said. "The instrument and format of that expression is important. In the coming weeks, we intend to work with the Congress to meet that objective in a way compatible with our broader policy goals."

A White House official said he believed that two tracks would be followed — an intensive and last-ditch effort to see if a negotiated solution is possible, and consideration for a covert aid program to aid the Unita forces.

Pressures are building in Congress to support Unita openly with \$27 million in humanitarian aid.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz and President Reagan's other key national security advisers were reported today to be in favor of providing covert aid to Unita, which is fighting to oust a Government backed by the Soviet Union and aided by Cuban troops.

Shultz Opposed Bill

Mr. Shultz had earlier expressed opposition to a House bill that would supply the \$27 million in openly financed humanitarian aid to Unita. But he is said to have no objections to joining Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger and William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, in backing a covert program if that is decided upon.

Mr. Shultz, in a letter last month to Representative Robert H. Michel, Republican of Illinois, the House minority leader, urged him to "discourage" the \$27 million in humanitarian aid because there seemed to be new opportunities for finding a negotiated regional solution in southern Africa.

Passage of that bill "would not contribute to the settlement we seek," Mr. Shultz said. His argument was that such aid would amount to taking sides openly in the Angolan civil war and would thereby alienate the Luanda Government, a key party to any negotiated settlement.

The White House has agreed to back Mr. Shultz temporarily in opposing the bill so as to give the State Department another chance to resolve the question of independence for South-West Africa and the removal of Cuban forces from Angola, an Administration official said. But the White House has refused to criticize any aid to the rebels.

No decision has been made on whether to authorize a secret aid program to the Savimbi forces, Administration officials said. But they said it was under active consideration, given the Administration's commitment to aiding anti-Communist "freedom fighters." It was not known when a decision might be made.

Two Bills in the House

Some members of Congress introduced a bill on Thursday to provide military aid openly to the Savimbi forces, without waiting for a covert program to be approved.

This means that there are two different bills awaiting action in the House, each authorizing \$27 million to Angolan rebels, one for humanitarian and the other for military aid.

The issue is reminiscent of the debate surrounding the supply of covert aid to the Nicaraguan rebels. Today several members of Congress signed a letter to President Reagan opposing either open or secret aid. The letter was

originated by Representative Matthew F. McHugh, Democrat of New York.

A decision to aid Unita — the acronym in Portuguese for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola — would undermine American mediation efforts, the letter said, and "would be perceived throughout Africa as a decision to consciously collaborate with the policies of South Africa."

But other letters, drafted by other members of Congress, have strongly supported aid to the Unita forces.

In 1975, Congress passed legislation prohibiting any aid to the rebels in Angola. The amendment — known for its sponsor, Senator Dick Clark, Democrat of Iowa — was repealed last summer.

The Clark amendment was passed in response to revelations that the Central Intelligence Agency, together with South Africa, was secretly aiding Unita. As a result of the financing cutoff, the United States and South Africa withdrew their support for Unita, and

the country was more or less divided, with Unita controlling a major part of southeastern Angola.

About 30,000 Cuban combat forces remained in Angola, along with 1,500 Soviet military advisers, to help the Luanda Government. The United States has been seeking to negotiate a settlement by which South Africa would withdraw from neighboring South-West Africa and the Angolans would ask the Cuban forces to leave.

Those negotiations, which at one time seemed on the verge of success, have foundered in the last several months as new clashes erupted between the Luanda and Unita forces.

Mr. Shultz, in his letter to Mr. Michel, said the Luanda Government, through envoys "has asked for our help in containing the fighting and has said it also wishes to renew an exploration for a settlement."